

The Speed of Culture Podcast: Taco Bell's Evolution Into a Lifestyle Brand

It's no secret that collaboration is essential to growth, but the how of it isn't always so clear—and it's the understanding of how that is a true competitive advantage. [Join Adweek X](#), a uniquely formatted event on December 4 in LA, to unlock fresh perspectives, true collaboration and growth.

As a household name in the fast-food industry, Taco Bell aspires to evolve beyond just food, positioning itself as a lifestyle and cultural brand. To explore this transformative vision, Suzy founder and CEO Matt Britton sat down with Sean Tresvant, who will take the reins as Taco Bell's CEO starting in January 2024.

On the latest episode of The Speed of Culture podcast, Tresvant unveils Taco Bell's consumer strategies to establish itself as a lifestyle brand. He also shares how the QSR leverages customer loyalty and authentic partnerships for brand success, its global expansion strategy, and the role of digital tools like AI in modern marketing.

Before joining Taco Bell, Tresvant spent almost 17 years at Nike. Most notably, he served as chief marketing officer for the iconic Jordan Brand. Some of the important achievements during his tenure include establishing the Jordan Brand's voice globally, pioneering the Emmy Award-winning Last Dance documentary and orchestrating the Fortnite activation in collaboration with Epic Games.

Before his tenure at Nike, Tresvant held various leadership roles at industry giants like Pepsi and Time's Sports Illustrated in New York. In his current role, he leads Taco Bell's teams for digital, brand management, strategy, creative, consumer data and business intelligence.

Listen to the latest episode to delve into Taco Bell's evolution beyond fast food.

Key highlights:

- 10:08 – 12:45 – **Mixing Tech, Data and Tradition:** Taco Bell's digital transformation strategy embraces in-store integrations across its vast network of more than 7,500 restaurants, as well as smartphone apps. The goal is to integrate the physical and digital to improve the customer experience, whether it's via the drive-thru, app-based content or third-party aggregators. An essential element in this strategy is first-party data, which paves the way for enhanced personalization and loyalty programs.
- 12:45 – 14:50 – **Authenticity in Brand Partnerships:** Authentic partnerships and interactions play a crucial role in QSR brand promotion. Taco Bell leaned into Doja Cat's off-the-cuff tweet about its Mexican pizza, and tapped into LeBron James to free the "Taco Tuesday" trademark. Taco Bell aims to collaborate with individuals who genuinely resonate with and appreciate the brand.
- 18:38 – 19:55 – **Brand Education for International Expansion:** While Mexican cuisine is popular in the U.S., it's less popular in countries like India, China and Malaysia. To successfully expand internationally, Taco Bell must focus on educating consumers about the cultural aspects of Mexican food, including how it's eaten and the unique flavors it offers.
- 20:06 – 21:03 – **The Role of AI in Modern Marketing:** In the QSR sector, AI has various applications, from

improving creativity to enhancing kitchen efficiency and helping franchisees. Taco Bell aims to harness AI effectively across multiple aspects of its business, including voice ordering at drive-thrus and internal creative solutions.

- 21:43 – 24:08 – **The Cornerstones to Business Success:** Leadership separates good and exceptional companies. Tresvant believes that without strong leadership, you can't achieve business success. So, he dedicates a significant part of his day to working closely with his team, ensuring they're motivated, confident and prepared to excel. However, collaboration with franchisees is also essential as it directly impacts the customer experience. Tresvant focuses on aligning their strategies to ensure all franchisees are on the same page in decision-making for present and future actions.

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